

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of using a remote wireless device to send a message to at least one desired destination via a communications system, the wireless device having a display, the method comprising:

- (a) executing an application running on the wireless device, the application presenting on the display a plurality of selectable message destinations and a plurality of selectable message formats;
- (b) a user generating a message using the wireless device; and
- (c) using one or more control buttons emulated by the application on the display to select (i) at least one of the destinations to which the generated message is to be sent, and (ii) at least one of the formats which define how the generated message is to be presented at the selected destinations.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications system is a cable television system which includes a local device in communication with a remote server and a television, the method further comprising:

- (d) the local device communicating electronic program guide (EPG) data to the wireless device, the application using at least a portion of the EPG data to provide an EPG menu on the display; and

- (e) using the control buttons to navigate the EPG menu and make program channel selections displayed on the television without displaying the EPG menu on the television.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

- (f) the remote server communicating the EPG data to the local device; and
- (g) in response to the user selecting a particular program channel while navigating the EPG menu, the wireless device sending one or more instructions to cause the particular program channel to be displayed on the television.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the wireless device automatically transmits, on a periodic basis, a signal to the local device requesting that updated EPG data be communicated from the remote server to the wireless device via the local device to refresh the application.
5. The method of claim 3, wherein the one or more instructions are included in a signal wirelessly transmitted from an output port of the wireless device to the local device over at least one of a radio frequency (RF) link and an infrared (IR) link.
6. The method of claim 3, wherein the one or more instructions are included in a signal wirelessly transmitted from an output port of the wireless device to the television over at least one of a radio frequency (RF) link and an infrared (IR) link.
7. The method of claim 3, wherein updated EPG data is communicated from the remote server to the wireless device via the local device on a periodic basis to refresh the application.
8. The method of claim 2, wherein the selectable message destinations include at least one of the local device, the television, a computer, the wireless device and another wireless device.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein the wireless devices are connected to a wireless local area network (WLAN).
10. The method of claim 2, wherein the local device is one of a set-top box (STB) and a modem.
11. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
 - (f) receiving, at the remote wireless device, at least one of a text message and an audible message generated by a user of the local device or the remote wireless device.

12. The method of claim 2, wherein the remote wireless device is used to control the selection of program channels displayed on the television.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein step (b) further comprises:
(b)(i) the user recording an audible message at the wireless device.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein step (b) further comprises:
(b)(i) the user entering a text message at the wireless device.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
(d) the application presenting on the display a plurality of selectable predetermined messages; and
(e) using the control buttons to select at least one of the predetermined messages to be sent to the selected destinations.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
(d) the user entering information into the remote wireless device to schedule when the generated message is to be sent.

17. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
(d) using one of the control buttons to immediately send the generated message to the selected destinations.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the selectable message formats include a text format and an audible format.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein the selectable message formats include a graphics format.

20. A remote wireless device, comprising:

(a) a display;

(b) an input device used to generate a message; and

(c) an application running on the wireless device, wherein the application presents on the display a plurality of selectable message destinations and a plurality of selectable message formats, and emulates on the display a plurality of control buttons used to select (i) at least one of the destinations to which the generated message is to be sent, and (ii) at least one of the formats which define how the generated message is to be presented at the selected destinations.

21. The remote wireless device of claim 20, wherein the wireless device is used to control the selection of program channels displayed on a television that is in communication with a local device.

22. The remote wireless device of claim 21, wherein the selectable message destinations include at least one of the local device, the television, a computer, the wireless device and another wireless device.

23. The remote wireless device of claim 22, wherein the wireless devices are connected to a wireless local area network (WLAN).

24. The remote wireless device of claim 21, wherein the application uses at least a portion of electronic program guide (EPG) data received from the local device to provide an EPG menu on the display of the remote wireless device, and the control buttons are used to navigate the EPG menu and make program channel selections displayed on the television without displaying the EPG menu on the television.

25. The remote wireless device of claim 21, wherein the local device is one of a set-top box (STB) and a modem.

26. The remote wireless device of claim 20, wherein the input device generates text messages and stores audible messages.

27. The remote wireless device of claim 26, further comprising:

(d) at least one speaker; and

(e) a receiver that receives at least one of a text message and an audible message generated by a user of a local device or the remote wireless device, wherein received text messages are presented on the display of the remote wireless device and received audible messages are outputted from the speaker.

28. The remote wireless device of claim 20, wherein the application presents on the display a plurality of selectable predetermined messages, and the control buttons are used to select at least one of the predetermined messages to be sent to the selected destinations.

29. The remote wireless device of claim 20, further comprising:

(d) a timer used to schedule when the generated message is to be sent.

30. A local device, the local device being in communication with a remote server and a television, the local device comprising:

(a) an input device that generates text messages;

(b) a recorder that stores audible messages; and

(c) a plurality of control buttons used to select at least one destination to send at least one of the text and audible messages to.

31. The local device of claim 30, wherein the control buttons are used to select, from a menu presented on the television by the local device, a predetermined message to send to the destination, and to control the selection of program channels displayed on the television.

32. The local device of claim 30, wherein the local device is one of a set-top box (STB) and a modem.

33. The local device of claim 30, wherein the destination is at least one of the television and a remote wireless device.

34. The local device of claim 30, further comprising:

(d) a receiver that receives at least one of a text message and an audible message generated by a user of the local device or the remote wireless device, wherein received text messages are presented on a display on the television and received audible messages are outputted from a speaker in the television.

35. The local device of claim 30, further comprising:

(d) a timer used to schedule when the messages are to be sent.

36. A method of using a remote wireless device to send a message to at least one desired destination via a communications system, the wireless device having a display, the method comprising:

- (a) inputting a message into the remote wireless device;
- (b) selecting at least one destination to where the message is to be sent from a plurality of destinations presented on the display;
- (c) selecting at least one format in which the message is to be presented from a plurality of formats presented on the display;
- (d) setting a time when the message to be sent to the selected destination;
- (e) initiating a software timer in the wireless device;
- (f) when the software timer expires, sending the message to the selected destination;

and

- (g) presenting the message in the selected format at a device associated with the selected destination.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein the communications system is a cable television system which includes a local device in communication with a remote server and a television, and the plurality of destinations include at least one of the local device, the television, a computer, the wireless device and another wireless device.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein the wireless devices are used to control the selection of program channels displayed on the television.

39. The method of claim 37, wherein the local device is one of a set-top box (STB) and a modem.

40. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

(h) encapsulating the message as a wireless message; and

(i) the device associated with the selected destination decoding the encapsulated message.

41. The method of claim 36, wherein the message is a reminder message.

42. The method of claim 36, wherein the format is at least one of text, audio and graphics.

43. The method of claim 36, wherein step (a) further comprises:

(a)(i) selecting a previously created message from a plurality of messages presented on the display.

44. A method of using a remote wireless device to send a message to at least one desired destination via a communications system, the wireless device having a display, the method comprising:

(a) inputting a message into the remote wireless device;
(b) selecting at least one destination to where the message is to be sent from a plurality of destinations presented on the display;
(c) selecting at least one format in which the message is to be presented from a plurality of formats presented on the display;
(d) sending the message to the selected destination; and

(e) presenting the message in the selected format at a device associated with the selected destination.

45. The method of claim 44, wherein the communications system is a cable television system which includes a local device in communication with a remote server and a television, and the plurality of destinations include at least one of the local device, the television, a computer, the wireless device and another wireless device.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein the wireless devices are used to control the selection of program channels displayed on the television.

47. The method of claim 45, wherein the local device is one of a set-top box (STB) and a modem.

48. The method of claim 44, further comprising:
(f) encapsulating the message as a wireless message; and
(g) the device associated with the selected destination decoding the encapsulated message.

49. The method of claim 44, wherein the message is an intercom message.

50. The method of claim 44, wherein the format is at least one of text, audio and graphics.

51. The method of claim 44, wherein step (a) further comprises:
(a)(i) selecting a previously created message from a plurality of messages presented on the display.